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SUBJECT: MGLB01: LEBANON MONITORING GROUP SITUATION

REPORT NO. 17

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SLOW PROGRESS IN TALKS ON ELECTION LAW IN DOHA  
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1. (SBU) Participants in the first day of negotiations told Embassy Beirut talks focused on the election law. Future Party leader Hariri's advisor, Ghattas Khoury, said that after several hours the committee made "some progress, but it's slow." Transportation Minister Safadi said the Doha dialogue had a "50-50" chance of success, but noted the Qatari PM is pushing both parties hard. (Ops/Embassy Beirut e-mail)

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FURTHER TALKS TO FOCUS ON CABINET; HIZBALLAH'S WEAPONS  
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2. (SBU) According to PM Siniora's senior advisor, the Qatari PM plans to discuss the Lebanese cabinet composition after an agreement on the electoral law. An advisor to Speaker Berri claimed Hariri's rejection of the 10-10-10 formula remains the major obstacle. Druze

leader Jumblatt acknowledged continuing disagreements within March 14 over the precise formula, but confirmed the group had rejected 10-10-10. (Ops/Embassy Beirut e-mail)

¶3. (SBU) Transportation Minister Safadi told Embassy Beirut the Qatari PM was trying to amend the agenda to include a discussion on Hizballah's weapons, a move supported by March 14. The PM indicated he would put something on paper committing the parties to discuss the issue later in Beirut. According to Berri's advisor, Hizballah's weapons would not be discussed until after the election of a president -- under the president's auspices with the participation of the Arab League and the Qataris. (Ops/Embassy Beirut e-mail)

¶4. (U) Minimize considered.  
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